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TAGS: UNGA PHUM ETRD PREL CU LG

SUBJECT: LATVIA TO FOLLOW EU LEAD ON CUBA ISSUES

REF: A. A) STATE 147620

¶B. B) STATE 148506

Classified By: Charge D'Affaires a.i. Stuart M. Seldowitz for Reason 1.
4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Pol/Econ Off delivered reftel demarches on October 29 to Dace Rutka, Head of the MFA's Americas Section, and Liga Brige, MFA Cuba Desk Officer. Rutka voided defining Latvia's positions on the specifics of both cables, and would only state that the GOL would follow EU consensus in regards to Cuban matters. The GOL has asked a number of questions about the Freedom Fund outlined in President Bush's recent speech and requested additional information. End summary.

Human Rights Action on Cuba

¶2. (C) Rutka would not say if Latvia is supportive of the measures outlined in reftel A regarding ways to fill the void left by the loss of the Cuban Special Representative at the UNHRC. She said that these matters would be negotiated among EU members and that Latvia would follow the resultant EU consensus. When pressed on whether Latvia would speak out in those EU discussions, especially given Latvia's own history in transitioning from a repressive communist system to democracy, Rutka said that Latvia could not take an active role as it does not have "first-hand information" on the situation in Cuba due to the lack of a Latvian embassy in Havana.

¶3. (C) She was interested, however, in the status of the "Freedom Fund" highlighted in President Bush's speech of October 24, namely wanting to know if the US funding mentioned was immediately available. She noted that the Latvian embassy in Washington had made the same inquiry to the Department.

¶4. (C) In response to further pressing on the importance of Eastern European nations using their Soviet-era and post-communism transition experiences to speak out on Cuba, both Rutka and Brige said that the MFA has participated in forums that support the Cuban opposition, notably an International Republican Institute-organized forum in Vilnius, and that while Latvia's contacts with Cuba are limited, the MFA does counsel Latvians who meet with the Cuban government (such as Latvian parliamentarians who traveled to Cuba this year) to bring up human rights concerns. Related to direct contacts with the GOC, Rutka noted that the Cuban ambassador in Helsinki would be traveling to Riga on November 6 to present credentials to be accredited to Latvia, but she did not say if human rights topics would be brought up in those meetings.

UNGA Cuba Embargo Resolution

¶5. (C) Rutka also declined to state Latvia's own position regarding the Cuban-sponsored UNGA resolution condemning the US embargo, only noting that Latvia would follow the EU line.
SELDOWITZ